

Indigenous Instructional Strategies and the Curriculum of Secondary General Education in Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of indigenous instructional strategies and the secondary general education curriculum in Mezam Division, Bamenda, North West Region of Cameroon. A descriptive and a cross-sectional survey research design with a mixed approach for data collection was used. The sample population was constituted of students and teachers of some selected secondary schools and parents within the Bamenda II, Bamenda III and Tubah sub-divisions in Mezam with a sample size of 384 respondents. Data obtained was analysed descriptively and inferentially using cross tabulations, frequencies, percentages and charts. The Chi-Square test was used to analyse the lone specific research hypothesis. The aim was to find out the level of significance of responses from the categorical variables in view of the impact of indigenous knowledge to the curriculum of secondary general education. Findings on showed that there is a significant impact of indigenous instructional strategies on the secondary general education curriculum in Cameroon. In conclusion, the introduction of livelihood skills that constitute educational elements of indigenous instructional strategies are worth integrating into the curriculum of secondary general education. Based on the finding, it was recommended that, there is need for the systematization of indigenous instructional strategies so as to ease its exploration and development for educational purposes. There is the need for the modification of the curriculum to suit the economic needs of learners and communities.

KEYWORDS: *Indigenous knowledge, indigenous values, indigenous instructional strategies*

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous knowledge refers to what people from a given community, society or ethnic group know and do, and what they have known and done for generations, what they have practiced through trial and error which have evolved and proven flexible enough to cope with change (Melchias, 2001). Emeagwali (2014) views indigenous knowledge as, the cumulative body of strategies, practices, techniques, tools, intellectual resources, explanations, beliefs, and values accumulated over time in a particular locality over time, without the interference and impositions of external hegemonic forces. Tchombe (2016) is of the view that, indigenous knowledge is a process of learning and sharing social life, values, histories, economic, and political practices unique to each cultural group. This is reflected in the communities' proverbs, stories, folktales, songs, dance and cultural amplifiers that are sources of indigenous knowledge. Hence, indigenous knowledge consists of all forms of learning systems used by indigenous people to impart knowledge and skills, values and beliefs through indigenous instructional practices to their youngsters from generation to generations.

Background of the Study

Pedagogy refers to the methods and principles of teaching and learning generally. Indigenous pedagogy is based on centuries of experience raising children to function productively in close-knit communities. Family members, elders, and other community members pass on this

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knowledge to each new generation. Central to the transmission of this wisdom is language, skills and beliefs through oratory, storytelling, hands-on activities, advice and conversations (Singh & Reyhner, 2013). Some indigenous pedagogical strategies include, participatory learning, mastery learning, lifelong learning, hands-on learning, contextual learning and holistic learning.

Indigenous people used types of games as an assistive technique to impart knowledge to young ones. Traditional games of memory were used by the older generation to teach the younger ones by stimulating them to recall and be quick to give answers to puzzles. They were games of memory, simulation and of physical prowess. They made children to remember and to think before they carried out or participated in actions/activities that may cause trouble or pain. Examples of such games are riddles, brainteasers and enigmas. With simulation games, children imitate experiences around them. The indigenous people improvised by using items found in their environment for cooking and hunting. Lastly, games of physical prowess involved the show of strength, agility and endurance. Young men/boys used locally fabricated slings for hunting birds. This game enhances estimation, planning and accuracy skills. These activities were imitative, imaginative, symbolic and representative of real life situations (Waithaka, 2009).

Indigenous oral literature also constituted an important method of instruction. This instructional approach includes

the use of story-telling such as myths, fables, moral tales, legends and allegories and thought provoking banter such as proverbs, riddles, aphorisms and parables. Indigenous learnt about their origin, history, culture and religion, from oral tradition. It was a reservoir of inexhaustible knowledge about the meaning and reality of life, morals, norms and survival techniques (Omolewa, 2007a). Story-telling was also used as an important pedagogical tool and a primary form of indigenous oral tradition. It was used to transmit the culture, experience, values, knowledge and wisdom from one generation to the other (Fasokun 2005). Stories telling was an act of entertainment but more importantly, it was used to express feelings, and to teach ideal forms of behaviour and morality. story-telling is to induct the youth into the moral, philosophical, and cultural values of the community. Boys, girls and even babies listened to their parents and imitated the heroes in the stories. This knowledge transfer approach of cultural values indicates that, learners make meaning out of what they hear (Ross, 2006).

Proverbs were used by indigenous people as a pedagogical hook with the role of provoking critical thinking. These thought-provoking statements and observations about life portray the entire worldview of indigenous people. They are perceived as catalysts of knowledge, wisdom, philosophy, ethics and morals. They call for a deeper reflection and further thinking and consideration of issues. Thus because of the beclouded nature of African proverbs, learners think beyond bounds, they wonder and think critically to enhance their creativity and capacity to make open-minded interpretations (Ngalim & Stanislaus, 2020). Proverbs enshrine wisdom, beliefs and the accumulated experiences of past and present generations. In most African traditional cultures, the use of proverbs is a common feature in the transmission of educational values (Omolewa, 2007a).

Another teaching technique that was used in African societies to teach issues, concepts, entertainment and as a medium of passing information is music and dance (Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011). Learners looked forward to the music and dance sessions with excitement because creativity and choice are usually encouraged and nurtured (Omolewa, 2007a). Language acquisition, speech therapy, literacy, numeracy, and other related themes were learnt through music and dance. They helped to equip the learners with the ability to function effectively in other areas of life.

Lastly, verbal warnings were used and more often followed by punishment. Children who committed offences might be rebuked, smacked or assigned some piece of work to complete. Serious offences and disciplinary problems, however, resulted in severe beating or other forms of inflicting pain on the body. Such punishment was regarded as reformatory (Kenyatta, 1938 cited in Teresa and Mba, 2013).

Principles of indigenous education

African indigenous education is founded on sound principles given that, it embodies educational elements such as objectives, content and instructional strategies. The main objective of indigenous education in Africa is to equip the learners with knowledge, skills and attitudes that will make them to live a holistic life, which upholds the cultural values and is responsive to the family and community needs (Omolewa, 2007b).

Ocitti (1973) as cited by Adeyemi & Adeyinka (2002) identified five principles through which African indigenous

education equips the younger generation with knowledge skills and attitudes. which are; preparationism, functionalism, communalism, perennialism and holism.

The principle of preparationism asserts that, education prepares its recipients to adjust to the community and to play a useful role in it. Children developed a sense of obligation towards the community and grew to appreciate its history, language, customs and values. This is perhaps one of the greatest attributes of indigenous education (Kelly, 1991 cited in Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002). According to Osaat & Asojeji, (2017), the role of teaching and learning is to equip boys and girls with the skills appropriate to their gender in preparation for their different roles in the society. For example, in most African traditional societies most girls were taught on domestic chores and farming so as to become good wives and mothers. While boys were prepared to become hunters and warriors, farmers, craftsmen and other male dominated occupations so as to become good husbands, fathers and family or community leaders.

The second principle of functionalism holds that, the purpose of education is to make learners productive so that they can be useful and integrated into their communities. The gap which today exists between study and the world of work was absent in pre-colonial society. Indeed, there was no unemployment in African traditional societies. Learners are to be empowered to become fully integrated into the occupation even before they graduate. Education therefore is always practical, and within a practical concrete context (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002).

According to the third principle of communalism, children belonged to the community and every member of the community participates in their upbringing (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002). Parents sought to bring up their children within a community in which each person sees his well-being in the welfare of the group. Children were brought up largely by the process of socialism as opposed to the process of individualism. This was done to strengthen the organic unity of the clan. In the absence of any immediate parent, any other member of the community can teach or correct a child. This makes teaching a collective responsibility (Njoki, 2013).

Perennialism is the fourth principle. It perceives education as a vehicle for maintaining or preserving the cultural heritage and *status quo*. The African indigenous education is conservative and is aimed at maintaining cultural heritage that has been handed down from one generation to the other. Generally, perennialism as a principle believes that, it is more beneficial to stick to certain absolute principles in a world that is so uncertain. It, therefore, sees education as a way of preparing the child to become acquainted with the finest achievements of his cultural heritage, to become aware of the values of his heritage (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002).

Lastly, this principle of holism sees African indigenous education as an enabler for young people to acquire a variety of skills that made them productive in many ways. The learners are involved in a variety of occupations and could acquire skills and knowledge in different domains of activities. A boy could work as a builder, farmer and fisherman. A woman worked as a gardener, housewife and cook, besides being a caretaker and nurse to her children (Adeyemi and Adeyinka, 2002). Thus, indigenous education is a multiple kind of education.

Hands-on learning curriculum perspectives and indigenous instructional strategies

Hands-on learning curriculum consists of learning by doing. It involves enabling the child's ability to think critically in a total learning experience by involving profundity of investigation using ideas, objects and materials as well as drawing the depth of investigations with objects, materials and phenomena. It entails using ideas and implicating the meaning and understanding from the experiences that students perform (Haury & Rillero, 1994, cited in Özlem & Jale, 2011). African indigenous pedagogies employ participatory processes at home and in the community, to promote learning through religious activities, and peer/age group activities, as "hands-on" and "work-play" activities, without a teacher who explains the procedures to follow in details (Pence & Nsameng, 2008).

Hands-on curriculum deals mainly with any instructional approach involving activity and direct experience with natural phenomena or any educational experience that actively involve learners in manipulating objects to gain knowledge or understanding. According to Özlem and Jale (2011), hands-on learning is a good idea to engage students actively in their learning. Hands-on activities are inexpensive by using easily obtainable and simple life materials, straight forward and practical to perform in class and adaptable for most of the lessons. It caters to all learning styles consisting of kinaesthetic, visual, adaptive and audio visual learners.

The elements that constitute hands-on curriculum perspective are: The orientation of educational objectives should be geared towards the development of skills to enable learners to be self-reliant and be less dependent on external factors. This corroborate with the one of the educational characteristic and function of indigenous knowledge. The content of education here is supposed to be based on the establishment of the relation between knowledge and its practical application in each domain of study and instructional activities here are supposed to be oriented on the development of the learner's skills. Hence, instructional activities such as tutoring, coaching, mentoring and learners' participation among other should prime (Özlem & Jale, 2011).

Hands-on learning curriculum from the preparationism and functional perspectives of indigenous education express the need for education to equip learners with particular skills and knowledge that can enable them fulfil their role and responsibility toward family and society.

In all, the relevance of curriculum perspectives to indigenous education lies in the fact that, their educational and instructional orientation corroborate with objectives and characteristics of indigenous knowledge. The need to relate knowledge with skills make learning practical as with the case of hands-on curriculum perspective, and the need to make education functional to serve the society or community it is meant for is substantiated in community-centred curriculum perspective. From a holistic view, the educational features of indigenous knowledge fit with the competence curriculum models.

Theoretical Review

Cognitive Apprenticeship Learning Theory and Indigenous Instructional Strategies: Cognitive apprenticeship is a theoretical instructional model that describes the design of a learning environment and helps novices become experts through guided learning. Teaching

strategies align well with goals and objectives to be taught in order to produce discipline-specific expertise. (Austin, 2009). In this model, the teacher is expected to explain systematically or procedurally, the cognitive processes, the learners are to observe, practice, and produce. These tasks are usually highly cognitive and complex in nature hence results in the acquisition of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills. They observe expert performance to facilitate skill development, and are able to carry out the same process on their own and also achieve the same objective as the expert. (Stalmeijer *et. al.*, 2013). Cognitive Apprenticeship allows learners to actively practice what they have learned in a real-life environment.

Instructional strategies associated with cognitive apprenticeship

Collins, Brown, and Newman (1989) as cited in Giebler *et. al.* (2019) associate six general instructional strategies with cognitive apprenticeship. They are designed to help learners acquire cognitive and meta cognitive skills through processes of observation, guided and supported practice which enables them to develop individual problem-solving strategies. The teaching strategies include modelling, coaching, scaffolding articulation, reflection and exploration.

Modelling: It involves the teacher actively demonstrating, explaining skills and procedures to learners. They observe the teacher perform activity and are expected to demonstrate both the physical act and his thinking. The teacher articulates an approach to problem solving (heuristics) and intentional thought process (controlled processes). Learners observe the teacher performing a task and ask questions (Walker *et. al.*, 2017).

Coaching: The teacher observes the learners while providing specific feedback on their performance. This enables the performance of the learners to be similar to the performance of the expert (Walker *et. al.*, 2017). Coaching is realized through interactions that are "immediately related to specific events or problems that arise as the student attempts to carry out the target task" (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989 as cited by Giebler *et. al.*, 2019).

Scaffolding: This involves the teacher offering support in the form of suggestions or material when he recognizes that a student is not able to solve a certain aspect of a task, the students and the teacher solve problems in a cooperative way (Giebler *et. al.*, 2019). The teacher provides the necessary support the student needs while learning something new and gradually reduces the support as the learner becomes more independent. This makes the learner to stand a better chance of using that knowledge independently.

Articulation: This occurs when students are given the opportunity to articulate their understanding of a particular task, concept, or method through some type of content mastery assessment (Stalmeijer *et. al.*, 2010). The teacher encourages students to ask questions and explain their thought processes and understanding. This helps to deepens knowledge, understanding, and memory in learners (Walker *et. al.*, 2017).

Reflection: This involves teacher asking the learner question in order to find out what they know. The teacher is expected to asks for learners' views to know what they have understood. Depending on the responses, the teacher may explain what they have not understood. (Walker *et. al.*,

2017). Reflection occurs when students ponder over on their own problem-solving strategies and understanding of concepts and compare them to other experts and/or students. Students look back over their efforts to complete a task and analyse their own performance.

Exploration: In this stage the learner is able to accomplish tasks and solve problems independently. The teacher offers a task/problem the students have to solve on their own (Giebler *et. al.*, 2019). The learners try out different strategies, hypotheses and observe their effects in order to set and pursue personal learning goals. Learning is self-directed and guided by learners which enables them to be engaged and focused on the learning process. This equally helps teachers to find learning experiences that are meaningful for learners.

Statement of the Problem

Western philosophies of education have been the source of knowledge base in formal schooling in most societies across the world while indigenous philosophies had little or no impact. This is based on the assumption that indigenous knowledge and philosophies is unempirical, superstitious, primitive and traditional (Breidlid, 2013). The same indigenous instructional strategies had relevant and appropriate content for the education of children before colonial education. This is coupled with the fact that, despite the remarkable educational orientation law that recognizes and recommends the inclusion of cultural values in the country’s educational systems, its effect is not yet visible. More so, unlike learners of secondary technical education, most learners of secondary general education upon completion of their educational circle lack adequate skills that can enable them to be self-reliant. Thus, the major reflection at the centre of this study is to assess the impact of

indigenous instructional strategies in the secondary school curriculum of general education

Objectives of the Study

This study is guided by a lone objective;
To find out the impact of indigenous instructional strategies on the curriculum of secondary general education.

Research questions

What is the impact of indigenous instructional strategies on the curriculum of secondary general education?

Research hypothesis

Ho: There is no significance impact of indigenous instructional strategies on the curriculum of secondary general education.

Ha: There is significance impact of indigenous instructional strategies on the curriculum of secondary general education.

Research Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was used in this study. The Sample size was 384. A questionnaire and open-ended questions were used for data collection.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistical analysis, while Chi-square test of independence was applied as inferential analysis to test the research hypothesis using the formula;

Chi-square $(X^2) = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$. Where, \sum =Summation and O=Observed frequency

The level of significance used in test statistics (p) = 0.05 or 5%. This implies that the result obtained will be (100-5) % or 95% reliable.

Verification of Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant impact of indigenous instructional strategies on secondary general education curriculum in Cameroon.

Ha: There is no significant impact of indigenous instructional strategies on secondary general education curriculum in Cameroon.

Table 1: Chi-Square Test Statistic

		Students	Teachers	Parents	Total
Yes	Observed	96	78	48	222
	Expected	111	78	34	
No	Observed	84	48	6	138
	Expected	69	49	21	
Total for observed		180 (50%)	126 (35%)	54 (15%)	360 (100%)

Chi-square $(X^2) = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$

$$X^2 = \frac{(96-111)^2}{111} + \frac{(78-78)^2}{78} + \frac{(48-34)^2}{34} + \frac{(84-69)^2}{69} + \frac{(48-49)^2}{49} + \frac{(6-21)^2}{21}$$

$$= 2.03 + 5.8 + 3.3 + 0.02 + 10.7$$

$$= 21.9$$

Conclusion:

Given that the test statistics (21.9) is greater than the critical value (5.99), the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis which states that, there is a significant impact of indigenous knowledge systems on secondary general education curriculum in Cameroon was accepted. The responses gotten from the interviews show that, integrating indigenous knowledge and practices into school curriculum will make learning contextual, livelihood skills and knowledge and moral values will also be transmitted to learner as shown on the table below.

Table 2 Frequencies on the Benefits of Integrating Indigenous Knowledge and Practices in School Curriculum

Themes	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Learning will be contextual	8	33.0	33.0
Children will have skills and knowledge to transform communities	11	46.0	79.0
Communities will benefit in terms of morality	5	21.0	100.0
Total	24	100.0	

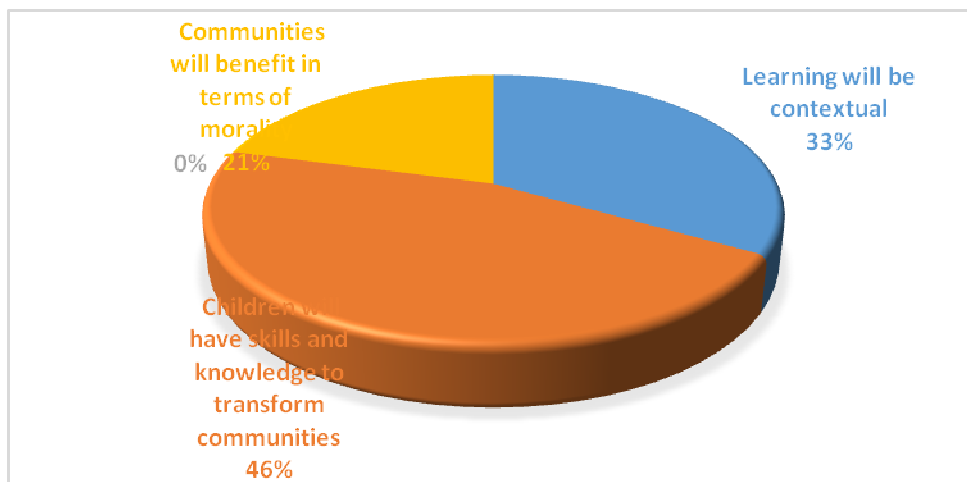


Figure 1: Distribution of grouped themes in open ended question

Summary of findings

This questions examined here is the impact of indigenous instructional strategies on the curriculum of secondary general education. Statistically, the findings show that, indigenous instructional strategies have a significant relevance to the curriculum of secondary general education. Most of the respondents were of the view that indigenous instructional strategies such as oral instructional activities, hands on activities and contextual learning build competence and skills in learners and as such, are worth being incorporated into the curriculum of secondary general education. This will help improve teaching and learning in schools. Ngalim and Stanislaus (2020) is in agreement with this perception on the use of traditional oral instructional strategies which provide pedagogic techniques that provoke critical thinking skills in learners.

Conclusion

African indigenous instructional strategies according to Korb (2018) is holistic and develops all aspects of an individual, including the cognitive, physical, social, and spiritual domains. There is the need to include hands-on activities and traditional oral instructional activities to make the content of the secondary general curriculum contextual. It is also in agreement with the cognitive apprenticeship theory that gives priority to hands-on pedagogical activities which is a clear demonstration of the implication of indigenous pedagogical practices to the curriculum.

Recommendations

It was recommended that the curriculum of secondary general education be reformed by introducing livelihood skills. There is the need for the systematization of indigenous instructional strategies so as to ease the exploration and development for educational purposes. There is also the need for the modification of the curriculum to suit the economic needs of learners and communities.

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